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Technology Diversions

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Until November of 1983, the Microelectronics Research Institute in Capetown, South Africa seemed to be a legitimate high technology enterprise. It had a respected academician in a senior position and claimed to be adhering to United States restrictions on the applications of militarily useful computers it purchased in the U.S. Most important, MRI had been given a stamp of approval by U.S. consulate officers in Capetown. They had visited the Institute and concluded that it was everything it purported to be.¹

But appearances were deliberately misleading. In fact, MRI was secretly owned by a 41-year-old Soviet KGB operative named Richard Mueller. A West German and since 1979 a fugitive from American justice, Mueller had MRI arrange for the purchase in the United States of a \$1.5 million Vax 11/782 high speed computer from the Digital Equipment Company. After receipt of the computer and special production machinery used in the design and manufacture of militarily critical semiconductors, Mueller had the cargo shipped from Capetown to Moscow. However, last November, while the freight was still at sea, U.S. authorities learned of Mueller's plan and were able to intercept the cargo at transshipment points in Western Europe.

Mueller, a wealthy man who had mansions in Capetown and Hamburg, disappeared, leaving behind his pretty blonde German wife Sieglinde, his Porsche, Mercedes Benz 500, two Rolls Royces, a 120-meter swimming pool, tennis court and Steinway piano and a stable of 100 East Prussian horses. Sieglinde Mueller told reporters she didn't know where her husband was. He was reportedly last seen in Vienna.²

Disrupting Mueller's technology diversion scheme was seen as a big achievement by American authorities. Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, whose Customs Service agents had played a key role in interdicting

the shipment, said the Vax 11/782 was "one of this nation's most sensitive computer systems." News reports stressed the importance of the Vax 11/782. *Newsweek* magazine said the computer was intended to serve in the design and production of Soviet weapons of the 1990s. The *Wall Street Journal* said the Vax 11/782 has wide military applications, ranging from the design of powerful integrated circuits to interpretation of transmissions from U.S. satellites.³ An American official was quoted as having said the Vax 11/782 and peripherals would have given the Soviets valuable insight into U.S. strategic weapons. "... the Russians would have had a complete computer system for American guided missile systems," the official said.⁴ Unquestionably, the Soviets had considerable faith in Mueller to have entrusted to him the acquisition of such an important computer.

Richard Mueller is one of the leading figures in an international team of technician-businessmen whose mission for the Kremlin is to acquire militarily useful high technology in the U.S. and ship it to the Soviet Union. Other known members of the team are Werner J. Bruchhausen, Volker Nast, Dietmar Ulrichshofer, Frederick Linnhoff, Anatoli (Tony Metz) Maluta, Sabina Dorn Tittel and Dr. Rudolf Sacher. Tittel is in a federal prison in California convicted of export violations. Found guilty in the same case, Maluta is free on appeal. But Mueller and the others are free men, living and working outside the United States and doing technology acquisition duties for the Soviets.

Mueller and the others may have ideological commitments to Soviet Communism that motivate them to do the effective labor they perform for the Kremlin. But money seems to be the major draw. Each of them has profited handsomely from these assignments. Mueller lived very well. Similarly, Maluta, smuggling controlled technology out of Southern California for the Soviets,

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